



grace

Folsom church of Christ  
*September, 2014*

# grace

## introduction

A famous preacher prefaced a sermon with this statement about grace:

...the substance and essence of the true gospel is the doctrine of God's grace—that, in fact, if you take away the grace of God from the gospel you have extracted from it its very life-blood, and there is nothing left worth preaching, worth believing, or worth contending for. Grace is the soul of the gospel: without it the gospel is dead. Grace is the music of the gospel: without it the gospel is silent as to all comfort.

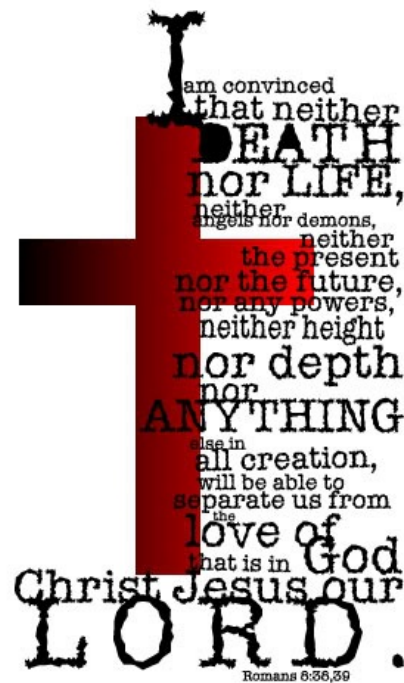
The essence of grace is Jesus Christ. Jesus came to “declare” the God of heaven whom no one has seen at any time (Jn. 1:18). He came full of grace and truth and “of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace” (Jn. 1:14, 16). Moses *gave* the law, but grace and truth *came through* Christ (Jn. 1:17).

Jesus was God's personal expression of grace, the Word of grace made flesh. Jesus exemplified grace through concrete action. It is, in fact, an *action*, not just a “concept.” Jesus' aim was to help all those with whom He came in contact — He came to “seek and save the lost” (Lk. 19:10). Words like *compassion* (Mt. 9:36), *mercy* (Mt. 9:13) and *love* (Jn. 13:1, 34-35) characterize the One who is full of grace.

Unfortunately, grace has not always been given its proper emphasis in our teaching and some of us have suffered, or even *sinned*, because of our faulty view of it. Much of our understanding of grace comes from the crucible of debate, instead of through a calm and thorough study of scripture. So we have a fairly good understanding of what grace *isn't*. But do we know what it *is*, why it is so important, and how it can help us each day to live the Christian life, fully equipped and adequate for every good work (2 Tim. 3:17)? Or have we shoved it into the background in favor of studying more “practical matters”?

Grace, especially when understood as nearly synonymous with love, is the central principle of the New Covenant. We cannot understand the New Testament (nor scarcely the Old!) without a clear understanding of the place of grace in God's plan. The apostle John is clear enough: Jesus came “full of grace and truth” (1:16) and grace and truth came through Jesus (1:17). The coming of Jesus Christ was the result of the grace of God. He is the ultimate gift from God, especially when we see Him on the cross. That alone makes it *foreground* material because Jesus Christ *is* grace.

This week, then, is devoted to a study of grace. It is not an exhaustive study; there is no way to cover all the aspects of grace. We want to explore its significance, its abuses, and illustrate how grace can help us in our daily effort to live as Christians should.



DAVID POSEY

# 1 what is grace?

1. What does the word "grace" mean to you?
2. Why do we need grace?
3. What is the difference between *grace* and *mercy*?
4. Where do we find grace?
5. What do we have to do to receive grace? What is "faith"?
6. What is the "gospel"?
7. What does grace do for you?

# 2 grace: the dark side

1. Describe the crucifixion of Jesus from the four gospels. Why are the accounts so brief?
2. Grace is defined as "gift" but was it free?
3. Why did Jesus have to die? Was there no other way?
4. Jesus is called "the Lamb of God" in John 1:29... what does that mean?

# 3 stunned by grace

1. Read and discuss the parables in Luke 15, with special emphasis on the parable of the prodigal son.
  - a. What was common among the things lost and found in each of the parables?
  - b. What was the reaction by those who found what was lost? Why?
  - c. What do these lost things symbolize (i.e., what is the spiritual significance of these stories)?
  - d. Describe all the elements of grace that you can find in the parable of the prodigal son.

# 4 erasing grace

1. Can grace actually be "erased"?
2. Where does that one cannot fall from grace come from?
3. Explain Galatians 5:4; Hebrews 10:26-31; II Peter 2:20-22
4. Read Romans 6 and discuss the consequences of continuing in willful sin.
5. Will grace "cover" you if you continue to sin willfully?
6. What is the proper mind-set for a Christian? See Romans 6:11 (Col. 3:1-4; Gal. 5:19-23).

# 5 grace-driven effort

1. Explain why the grace of God should motivate us to work harder for God and extend grace to others (if necessary, review the definition of grace in the first lesson).
  
2. Explain the relationship between grace and works. Does our work “earn” us anything? What is “grace-driven effort”?
  
3. Explain some of the ways that we can extend grace to others (read Romans 12:3-8; Phil. 2:1-5; see Mark 9:41).
  
4. Examine what Jesus told His disciples to do.
  - Read Mt. 10:5-7 (the beginning of the “limited commission”). What was the aim of their mission?
  
  - Read Mt. 28:18-20. What was the main mission of the disciples in the Great Commission?
  
  - Read Acts 2:22-24 – how did Peter “extend grace” to the people he was preaching to?

supplementary  
material



# word study: grace

The word group in Greek, from which we get our translation, “grace,” includes the words “gift” and “joy.” Bauer (*A Greek Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*) gives a range of meanings which include graciousness, attractiveness, favor, grace, gracious care or help, goodwill, gracious deeds, gift and benefaction. It can be active, when one volunteers to do something which he is not bound to do, especially the gracious intention of God, or passive, when one experiences favor from another.

In the *Theological Wordbook of the Bible*, N. H. Snaith compares the Greek word *charis*, with Hebrew word *chesed*, (often translated “lovingkindness”) describing them both, essentially, as free and undeserved favor from God, who is under no obligation whatsoever to show His favor to man, but does it anyway. J. I. Packer points out that *charis* corresponds to the Old Testament words for grace (*chen*) and love (*ababab*) which express God’s favor toward His people, Israel, that He will not let go (see Dt. 7:7; Hosea 11:1-11). The Hebrew verb for love (*abeb*) is translated in the Septuagint by the Greek word *agape* (“love”), a word familiar to most of us.

As you can see, it is important to understand, first of all, that God is not obligated to show favor to anyone. When He does, it is purely out of the goodness of His nature. Secondly, no one can claim favor from God as a right, because no one has legal or moral standing to do so (Rom. 3:10-20, 23). The basic meaning of *chen* is favor from a superior to a suppliant who cannot claim favorable treatment as a right. Thirdly, grace is a gift — it is always free. If grace is not free (to the recipient), it would not be grace (cf. Rom. 4:4; 11:6).

Free grace does not necessarily mean *unconditional* grace, however. Gifts that are offered must be accepted, and virtually all gifts have conditions attached, even if it is only the reaching out and taking of the gift. Such conditions do not make the gift any less “free,” as we all perfectly understand. God’s grace is gratuitous, but conditional. We must appropriate the gift by our trusting submission and absolute obedience to “the God of all grace.” This is nothing like “work” or “repayment.” As a matter of fact, it is rather arrogant to think we could repay or work off God’s gift in the first place. All we can do is thank Him and walk by our faith.

Much of modern day religion has missed this point and have embraced a concept of grace which has cheapened it and even “turned the grace of God into lasciviousness” (Jude 4).

There are people in churches of Christ, as well, who have embraced the same false concept and have kept one foot in the world, believing that God’s grace will “cover” them. Our aim is to find out what the Bible says about grace and let the Scriptures define it for us.

“In Paul ... *charis* is never merely an attitude or disposition of God ('God's character as gracious'); consistently it denotes something much more dynamic – the wholly generous act of God...”

JAMES D.G. DUNN, *ROMANS 1-8* (DALLAS: WORD BOOKS, 1988), p. 17.

# perspectives on grace

<i>Perspective</i>	<i>Terms</i>	<i>Requires for Justification</i>	<i>Actual Result</i>	<i>Manifestations</i>	<i>Scriptures to Consider</i>
Saved by Law, works (code)	Nomism, Legalism, Galatianism (emphasis on law)	Perfect performance of the code of conduct. Flawless obedience to the Law of God.	Fear, guilt, "straining & striving" or a dragging of the law down to level that can be kept.	"Creedal talk"; rarely speaks of trusting God or of grace. Emphasis on works; God's part is minimized or reduced. Attitude very common in cults, under guise of "total commitment." In less obvious forms, there is a marked lack of assurance because one is never "good enough."	Romans 1-8; Galatians; Hebrews; Col. 2; I Jn. 1.
Grace = License	Presumption, cheap grace, "easy-believism" (emphasis on self)	Rely on God for salvation, regardless of personal holiness	Self-indulgence, sin.	Lifestyle shows he is clearly unconcerned with obedience to God's word; probably willfully ignorant of most of it. Avoids any discussion of guilt or God's wrath.	Jude; I & II Peter; Romans 1-3; Galatians 5-6.
Grace (Faith) Only	Unconditional election, irresistible grace, Calvinism (emphasis on God's sovereignty)	God supplies grace and faith and makes one holy.	Man is totally passive in respect to his salvation. No room for free will. Requires the unconditional condemnation of the non-elect.	May be a righteous individual; many Calvinists are. Others are very weak in regular commitment: e.g., membership in mainline denominations has plummeted in last twenty years. Though they may not act like it, their doctrine makes them glorified puppets.	Matthew and Luke; Acts; Jas. 2; every passage that implies that man has a choice to make relative to Christ.
Saved by Status (i.e., by virtue of membership in the church)	Christ and church are synonymous (emphasis on church).	Attachment to the "right" church.	Thinks exclusively in terms of the unit. Weekly worship put for daily commitment.	Conversations about spiritual things almost always include references to the church (universal?).	Rev. 2-3; Hebrews 9:27; 11; Rom. 4; II Cor. 5:10.
Saved by Grace through Faith	Relationship, Fellowship with God and Christ (emphasis on Christ and love).	Belief, trust, submission, obedience.	Forgiveness, life, justification. Obedience, trust, confidence, assurance.	Has made a clean break with the love of sin. Paul's attitude is exemplary: Galatians 2:20; 6:9-10, 14.	The New Testament, with examples from the OT. See Hebrews 11, for example.

## The High Cost of the Free Gift

"There they **crucified** him, and with him two others, one on either side, and Jesus between them." *John 19:18*

When a sense of sin has been awakened in us, we will mourn, not only for what Christ has suffered, but for what He has suffered *for us*. It was while we were sinners that Christ died for us (Rom. 5:8). God prepared a body for His Son so that He could suffer in that body for all of us (Heb. 10:5). As we focus on the cross, our thoughts should never forget the reason for it.

We know that Jesus suffered much on the eve of the execution from the account in Mt. 26. "My soul is deeply grieved, to the point of death," He told His disciples, and went off to pray to His Father: "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." The words of Dt. 21:23 undoubtedly weighed heavily on His mind: "For He who is hanged on a tree is accursed of God." And surely He recognized that crucifixion was universally considered the most horrible form of death and was reserved for the most vile.

The punishment began when Jesus was stripped and inflicted with the most terrible

form of scourging, the flagellum of the Romans, a whip in which nails or pieces of bone were attached to intensify the pain. Often the sufferer died under it.

It was 9 O'clock when the procession reached Golgotha (Calvary) and the dreary preparations for the crucifixion commenced. The most awful moment was to follow: Jesus was laid down upon the implement of torture. His arms were stretched along the cross-beams and at the center of the

open palms, the point of a huge iron spike was placed, and then driven home into the wood below. Another spike was driven through the feet, tearing its way through the quivering

flesh. Then the "accursed tree" was heaved up slowly and the end fixed firmly in a hole in the ground. The feet were just slightly above the ground and Jesus was in easy reach of anyone who might choose to strike Him.

Death by crucifixion includes all that pain and death can have of the horrible and ghastly—dizziness, cramp, thirst, starvation, sleeplessness, traumatic fever, tetanus (lockjaw); the publicity of shame, the long continuance of torment, the horror of anticipation, the mortification

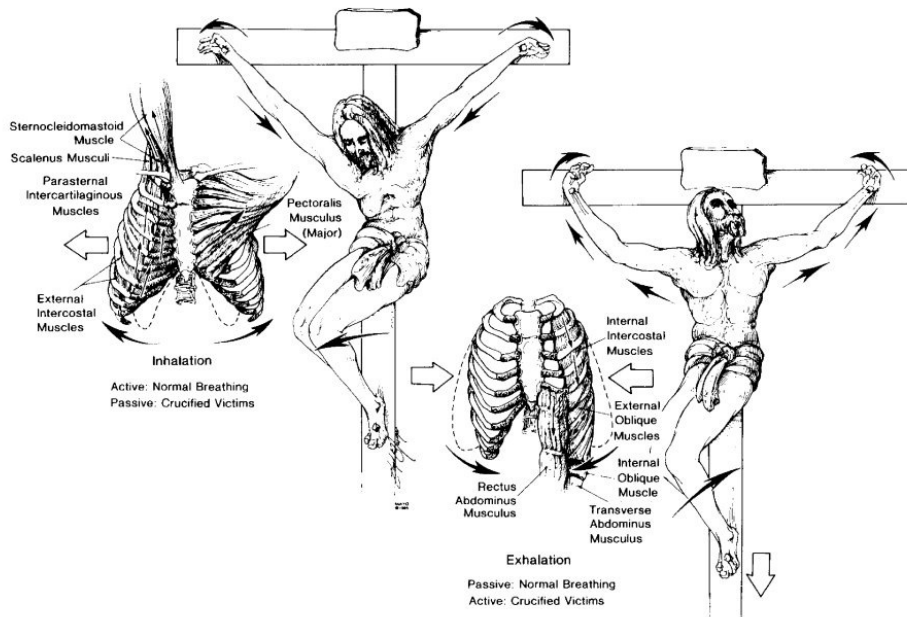
of unattended wounds, all endured up to, but short of unconsciousness.

The unnatural position made every movement painful; the lacerated veins and crushed tendons throbbed with incessant anguish; the wounds, inflamed by exposure, gradually gangrened; the arteries, especially of the head and stomach, became swollen and oppressed with surcharged blood; and, while each variety of misery went on, gradually increasing, there was added to them the intolerable pang of burning and raging thirst, for which Jesus was offered a sponge laced with vinegar.

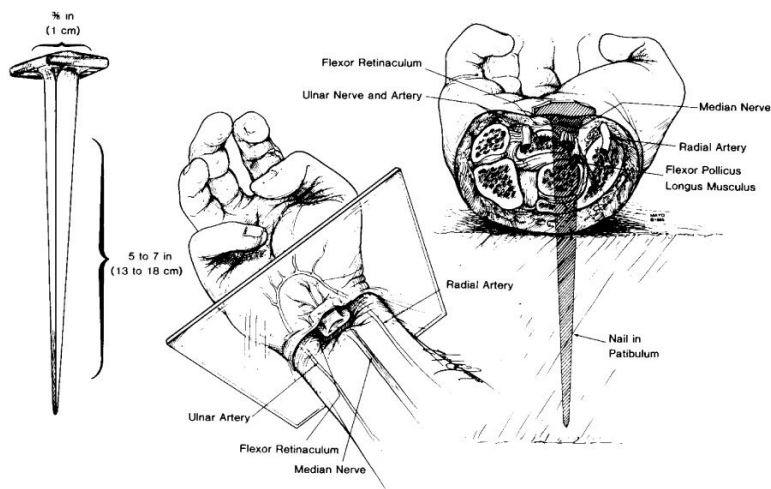
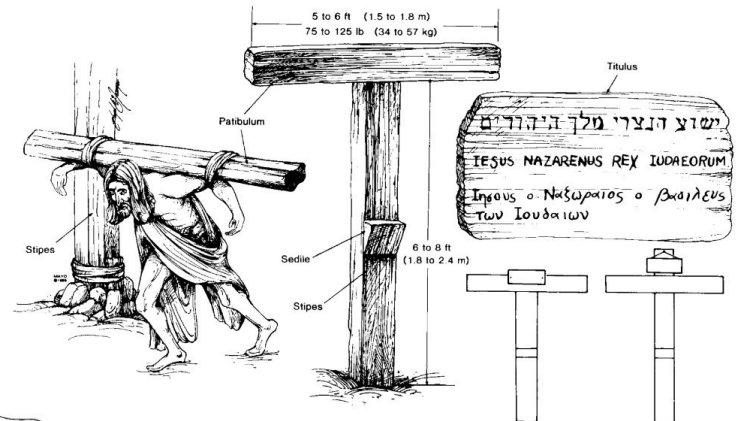
Such was the death which Christ suffered for you and me. Such is the stark reality of the cost of grace to God, a gift which He has so freely given us.



# notes



Sketches by a doctor of death by crucifixion which has been called the worst method of capital punishment ever devised by man.



## the day of atonement

As we read through Leviticus 16, it is clear that God takes His worship very seriously. The chapter begins as God gave Aaron (Moses's brother and the first high priest) specific instructions on how to enter His presence. The rest of the chapter describes what is supposed to happen on the Day of Atonement. On this one day out of the entire year, one man out of all the Israelites (the high priest) was allowed to enter the Most Holy Place, the Holy of Holies, and stand before God on behalf of the people.

The high priest was to take with him the blood of a spotless animal. Actually, three animals were involved in this ceremony. First, he was to sacrifice a bull as an offering to atone for his own sins, because he could not come into the presence of God on his own accord—no one, not even the high priest, is holy or perfect. Then the high priest would offer two goats. The first goat would be sacrificed, and its blood would be smeared on the cover of the ark of the covenant just as the bull's blood had been. Picture the significance of this. Inside the Holy of Holies, God's presence was looking down on the ark of the covenant, which contained a copy of the Law that Israel had broken through their sin. Then the lid (also referred to as the "mercy seat") of this ark is smeared with sacrificial blood. This blood satisfied the wrath of God because a substitute was offered in place of the people who deserved His wrath. So instead of seeing the Law that was broken, God looked down and saw the blood of atonement. Essentially, this sacrifice died in place of the entire community of God's people. Try to picture the intensity of this scene. Imagine waiting outside of the Holy of Holies as the high priest entered to make his offering on behalf of the people. Here was a sinful man entering into the very presence of Almighty God! Imagine the joy you would feel as the high priest safely emerged from God's presence, a sign that the sacrifice had been accepted and your sins had been atoned for.

"So Jesus also suffered **outside** the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood."

Hebrews 13:12

The priest would then take the second goat (the first goat had been sacrificed), symbolically lay his hands on the head of the goat to represent the sins of the people being transferred to this animal, and then release that goat to "bear all their iniquities on itself to a remote area." This was another powerful picture of what was happening with the sins of God's people. Their sin was being removed, carried off to a remote location, never to visit them again. Their guilt and condemnation were gone.

Keep in mind that as amazing as this feeling of joy over the cleansing of their sin must have been, it inevitably faded. This ceremony was to be repeated every year because Israel would not stop sinning. And the Day of Atonement was supplemented by an ongoing and detailed sacrificial system because Israel's sin was constant. Sin is not an external problem; it runs through the core of each of us and continually manifests itself in a variety of ways. Dealing with sin was therefore an important and familiar part of the everyday lives of the Israelites.



Source: <https://www.multiplymovement.com/Material/254>

## passover

The name given to the chief of the three great historical annual festivals of the Jews. It was kept in remembrance of the Lord's passing over the houses of the Israelites (Exodus 12:13 ) when the first born of all the Egyptians were destroyed. It is called also the "feast of unleavened bread" (Exodus 23:15; Mark 14:1; Acts 12:3 ), because during its celebration no leavened bread was to be eaten or even kept in the household ( Exodus 12:15 ). The word afterwards came to denote the lamb that was slain at the feast (Mark 14:12-14; 1 Corinthians 5:7).

A detailed account of the institution of this feast is given in Exodus 12 and 13. It was afterwards incorporated in the ceremonial law ( ) as one of the great festivals of the nation. In after times many changes seem to have taken place as to the mode of its celebration as compared with its first celebration (compare Deuteronomy 16:2,16:5-6; Leviticus 23:10-14; Numbers 9:10-11; 28:16-24 ). Again, the use of wine (Luke 22:17 Luke 22:20 ), of sauce with the bitter herbs ( John 13:26 ), and the service of praise were introduced.

There is recorded only one celebration of this feast between the Exodus and the entrance into Canaan, namely, that mentioned in Numbers 9:5 . (See JOSIAH .) It was primarily a commemorative ordinance, reminding the children of Israel of their deliverance out of Egypt; but it was, no doubt, also a type of the great deliverance wrought by the Messiah for all his people from the doom of death on account of sin, and from the bondage of sin itself, a worse than Egyptian bondage (1 Corinthians 5:7; John 1:29; 19:32-36; 1 Peter 1:19; Galatians 4:4-5). The appearance of Jerusalem on the occasion of the Passover in the time of our Lord is thus fittingly described: "The city itself and the neighborhood became more and more crowded as the feast approached, the narrow streets and dark arched bazaars showing the same throng of men of all nations as when Jesus had first visited Jerusalem as a boy. Even the temple offered a strange sight at this season, for in parts of the outer courts a wide space was covered with pens for sheep, goats, and cattle to be used for offerings. Sellers shouted the merits of their beasts, sheep bleated, oxen lowed. Sellers of doves also had a place set apart for them. Potters offered a choice from huge stacks of clay dishes and ovens for roasting and eating the Passover lamb. Booths for wine, oil, salt, and all else needed for sacrifices invited customers. Persons going to and from the city shortened their journey by crossing the temple grounds, often carrying burdens...Stalls to change foreign money into the shekel of the temple, which alone could be paid to the priests, were numerous, the whole confusion making the sanctuary like a noisy market" (Geikie's Life of Christ).

These dictionary topics are from

M.G. Easton M.A., D.D., Illustrated Bible Dictionary, Third Edition,

Behold  
the  
Lamb of  
God, which  
taketh away  
the sin of the  
world.

John 1: 29





# Are You Sure?

Many people spend much time worrying about whether they are saved. Some believe that salvation involves some miraculous “better-felt-than-told” work of God in their fleshly heart and they spend much time trying to interpret the past events of their lives to determine if this work has been done. Others are sure it has not been done and they become almost insane with fear that God has passed them by. These ideas are false and not only rob men and women of the joy of being a Christian, but may actually keep them from being saved.

We can be just as sure that we are saved as that the bible is God’s word and that God keeps His promises. Our certainty is based upon our faith in His word.

If a man goes to a bank to borrow one hundred dollars, the banker will give him a note to sign. He then may say, “If you will sign this note and send it to me, I will deposit the money in your account.” When the man has complied with these conditions and is sure the note has been received by the bank, he will not hesitate to draw on the deposit. Faith tells him the banker has done what he has promised to do.

Recorded in Mark 16:16 are these words of Jesus, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.” When we have done these things, we can be sure of it because we have done what was commanded of us and we have enough

confidence in Him to be sure that he will do what he has promised.

After we become God’s child, we have another promise: “if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin”(I Jn. 1:7). If I diligently study to see the light and then diligently walk in it, I shall be sure he forgives me of any further sins I commit through weakness or ignorance.

Faith in God’s promises is a firm foundation for our certainty of salvation. No other foundation can be trusted; others only deceive. For this reason, we must not depend on what others say but we must personally study the scriptures with great diligence to determine the conditions which God has attached to His promises and to be certain that we comply to the best of our ability with ever one. Then we can be sure we are saved.

SEWELL HALL

## amazing grace

Analyze this great song, line-by-line. This song is the most recorded hymn in history – over 6,000 recorded versions as of 2010 – not only by so-called “Christian” recording artists, but by secular singers as well. The list includes LeAnn Rimes, Joan Baez, Judy Collins, Johnny Cash, Rod Stewart and even Janis Joplin!



John Newton, the author of this hymn, captained a slave trading ship, but came to see the error of his ways through the reading of the Scriptures.

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## Amazing Grace.

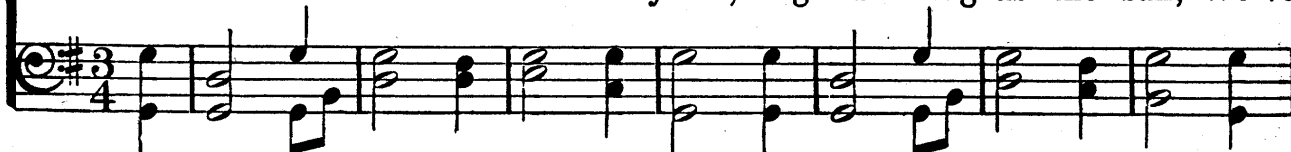
John Newton.

*McIntosh. C. M.*

Arr. by E. O. Excell.



1. A - maz - ing grace! how sweet the sound, That saved a wretch like me! I
2. 'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, And grace my fears re-lieved; How
3. Thro' man - y dan-gers, toils and snares, I have al - read - y come; 'Tis
4. When we've been there ten thousand years, Bright shin-ing as the sun, We've



once was lost, but now am found, Was blind, but now I see.  
pre - cious did that grace ap - pear The hour I first be-lieved!  
grace hath bro't me safe thus far, And grace will lead me home.  
no less days to sing God's praise Than when we first be - gun. A - MEN.





*Let's discuss the concept described below...*

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## "grace driven effort"

"People do not drift toward holiness. Apart from grace-driven effort, people do not gravitate toward godliness, prayer and obedience to Scripture, faith and delight in the Lord. We drift toward compromise and call it tolerance; we drift toward disobedience and call it freedom; we drift toward superstition and call it faith; we cherish the indiscipline of lost self-control and call it relaxation; we slouch toward prayerlessness and delude ourselves into thinking we have escaped legalism; we slide toward godlessness and convince ourselves we have been liberated."

D. A. Carson, *For the Love of God II*

### illustration

The case reminds me of the story of half-a-dozen boys who had severe fathers, accustomed to beat them within an inch of their lives. Another boy was with them who was tenderly beloved by his parents... These young gentlemen met together to hold a council of war about robbing an orchard. They were all of them anxious to get about it except the favored youth, who did not agree with the proposal. But one of the other boys said, "*You* don't need to be afraid: if our fathers catch us at this work, we shall be half-killed, but your father won't lay a hand upon *you*."

The little boy answered, "Do you think because my father is kind to me, that I'll do wrong and upset him? I will do nothing of the sort to my dear father. He is so good to me that I cannot anger him."

It would appear that the argument of the many boys was not convincing to their young companion: the opposite conclusion was just as logical, and evidently carried weight with it. If God is good to the undeserving, some men will go into sin, but there are others of a nobler order whom the goodness of God leads to repentance. They scorn the beast-like argument—that the more loving God is, the more rebellious we may be; and they feel that against a God of goodness it is an evil thing to rebel.

FROM A SERMON BY CHARLES SPURGEON

# For those who may think they are not very useful to God in the kingdom...

A water bearer in India had two large pots, each hung on each end of a pole which he carried across his neck. One of the pots had a crack in it, and while the other pot was perfect and always delivered a full portion of water at the

## The Cracked Pot

end of the long walk from the stream to the master's house, the cracked pot arrived only half full.

For a full two years this went on daily, with the bearer delivering only one and a half pots full of water in his master's house. Of course, the perfect pot was proud of its accomplishments, perfect to the end for which it was made. But the poor cracked pot was ashamed of its own imperfection, and miserable that it was able to accomplish only half of what it had been made to do.

After two years of what it perceived to be a bitter failure, it spoke to the water bearer one day by the stream. "I am ashamed of myself, and I want to apologize to you." "Why?" asked the bearer. "What are you ashamed of?" "I have been able, for these past two years, to deliver only half my load because this crack in my side causes water to leak out all the way back to your master's house. Because of my flaws, you have to do all of this work, and you don't

get full value from your efforts," the pot said.

The water bearer felt sorry for the old cracked pot, and in his compassion he said, "As we return to the master's house, I want you to notice the beautiful flowers along the path. Indeed, as they went up the hill, the old cracked pot took notice of the sun warming the beautiful wild flowers on the side of the path, and this cheered it some. But at the end of the trail, it still felt bad because it had leaked out half its load, and so again it apologized to the bearer for its failure.

The bearer said to the pot, "Did you notice that there were flowers only on your side of your path, but not on the other pot's side? That's because I have always known about your flaw, and I took advantage of it. I planted flower seeds on your side of the path, and every day while we walk back from the stream, you've watered them. For two years I have

been able to pick these beautiful flowers to decorate my master's table. Without you being just the way you are, he would not have this beauty to grace his house."

Each of us has our own unique flaws. We're all cracked pots. But if we will allow it, the Lord will use our flaws to grace His Father's table.



# grace, summarized

## Grace cost God His only Son

If we forget everything else, we should remember that grace is centered in the cross. It is a far cry from a “nice warm feeling” that God has for His creation — whether He has that or not is irrelevant — the Bible never suggests that grace is the “warm fuzzies.”

In fact, when we think accurately about grace, our first thought may well be repugnance at the idea that God has to send His Son to the awful cross because of us.

Grace cost God a great deal. His willingness to sacrifice His Son for us, “while we were yet sinners” (Rom. 5:8) is nearly incomprehensible, at least from a human level.

Grace, ultimately, is God’s love put into action through His Son.

## Grace is free

Grace was very costly to God, but it is free to us (see Rom. 5:15-17). There is no way we can earn the gift, otherwise it would not be a gift.

It may come as a surprise that we don’t all embrace this quite as readily as we might expect. Receiving a gift is more difficult than it first appears. There is a strong inclination in most of us — perhaps due to upbringing — that causes us to reject the notion of a pure gift. We may feel that if we didn’t earn it, it’s not worth much.

But grace must be accepted as a gift or we will nullify the force of it. Paul made this point in the letter to the Galatians. A failure to grasp this point is the primary reason some “fall away from grace” (Gal. 5:4).

## Grace is free but not cheap

Grace is free, but not cheap. What is “cheap grace”? This is the other extreme from the “earn it” view. This is a willingness to take the gift but without appreciating it.

Those who fail to recognize or appreciate the cost of grace may view it as a covering for sin. They turn the grace of God into a license to practice sensuality (Jude 4). They say, “God will forgive me; that’s his job.” But as Jude says, “their condemnation is just.”

## Grace is not unconditional

Another false view of grace is that because it is free, it is “irresistible”; that is, that there are no conditions to receiving it.

But Paul says that we have “obtained access” to grace “by faith” (Rom. 5:2). Without faith, we will not seek grace nor can we obtain it. Grace is God’s

part, centered in the cross. Faith is man’s part, and comes through hearing the word of God (Rom. 10:17).

We can illustrate this in several ways. For example, a suitor asks his sweetheart to marry him, and holds out a diamond ring, in all its brilliance. He offers the ring without cost; it is a gift, motivated by grace and love. If she accepts it, their relationship changes — they are “engaged.” But if his sweetheart never takes the ring and places it on her finger, while it is no less a gift, there is no change in their relationship because she has not accepted it.

God’s grace, likewise, must be taken. He will not force it on anyone.

## Grace does not eliminate “law”

Some are under the impression that grace and law are mutually exclusive — that if we are “under grace” instead of “under law” then there is no law.

Grace without law is impossible. Law defines sin (Rom. 4:15) and without sin (and therefore, without law) there would be no reason for grace. If there were no sin, there would be no reason for Christ to die on the cross, which is the primary manifestation of God’s grace.

Grace does not eliminate law; instead, it saves us from the effect of not keeping law perfectly. See Gal. 3:21; I Cor. 9:21; Rom. 3:8; 6:1, 15.

## The Final Word on Grace

Ultimately, it will all come down to what we do with God’s grace. The word of His grace (His gift of Jesus) has been preached — the question is, how will we respond? Or, to put it in terms Pilate’s question, “What shall I do with Jesus who is called the Christ?”

II Cor. 5:10 says we will all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. What verdict will we hear? The answer depends totally on how we respond, day-in and day-out to the “indescribable” gift of God, His grace. Those who cherish it and live in appreciation for it will hear those words, “Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of your Lord.”

# for further study

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Read John 1:14-17 and explain the use of the term "grace" in relation to Christ.

Read Acts 4:32-34. How is the term "grace" used in this text?

Read Acts 6:7-9. In what sense was Stephen "full of grace"?

Read Acts 11:22-24. When Barnabas "saw the grace of God," what did he actually see?

Read Acts 13:42-44. What were Paul and Barnabas urging the people to "continue in"?

Read Acts 14:2-4. How does one "bear witness to the word of His grace"?

Read Acts 14:25-27 & 15:39-41. How is one "commended" to the grace of God?

Read Acts 15:10-12. Explain, in context.

Read Acts 18:26-28. How do we believe "*through* grace"?

Read Acts 20:23-25. What is the "gospel of the grace of God"?

Read Rom. 1:6-8. How did Paul receive "grace and apostleship"?

Read Rom. 3:23-25. Describe "justification by grace."

Read Rom. 4:15-17. In what sense does the "promise rest on grace"?

Read Rom. 5:1-3. Explain how we gain *access* to grace.

Read Rom. 5:14-21. Explain the term "much more" in this text and how grace abounds "all the more."

Read Rom. 6:1, 14-15. Explain the relationship between grace and sin.

Read Rom. 11:5-6. How was the remnant "chosen by grace"? What is the relationship of grace and works?

Read Rom. 12:5-7 & Eph. 4:6-8. Explain the place of grace in the use of our abilities.

Read Rom. 16:19-21. How is the "grace of Jesus Christ with" us?

Read I Cor. 3:9-11. What is the nature of this "grace" given to Paul?

Read I Cor. 15:9-11. Describe each use of the word "grace" in this passage (there are three in the ESV).

# for further study

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Read II Cor. 4:15. How does grace "extend to more and more people"?

Read II Cor. 6:1-3. How might one "receive the grace of God in vain"?

Read II Cor. 8:1-10. There are several uses of the word "grace" in this reading. Describe each one.

II Cor. 9:7-9. What, specifically, is being *given* to the Corinthians? (I.e., define "grace.")

Read II Cor. 12:1-10. Describe how Paul uses the term grace in this chapter. Does grace always produce physical benefits?

Read Gal. 1:5-7. How does the "other gospel" that Paul mentions here affect one's calling in the "grace of Christ"?

Read Gal. 1:15 and 2:9. What specific act of grace is Paul referring to?

Read Gal. 2:20-21. How might the grace of God be "nullified"?

Read Gal. 5:3-5. How can we fall from grace?

Read Eph. 1:1 to 2:8 and summarize Paul's use of grace (note, also, possible synonyms for grace used in this reading).

Read Eph. 3:1-3. In what sense was Paul a "steward" of God's grace? Cf. 3:7-8

Read Eph. 4:1-8. What does grace refer to here? What passages that we have studied earlier refer to something similar?

Read Eph. 4:28-30. How might we give or impart grace to others?

- What does "corrupting talk" produce, instead of grace?

Read Phil. 1:6-8. How were the Philippians "partakers" of grace with Paul?

Read Col. 1:5-7. What is involved in "understanding" the grace of God?

Read Col. 4:5-7. Describe "gracious" speech.

II Thess. 1:11-12. What does it mean to "glorify" God and how do we do it "according to the grace of our God"?

II Thess. 2:15-16. Describe, from this reading, how grace promotes mental health.

Read I Tim. 1:13-15. Here grace is described as "overflowing" (ESV) or "more than abundant" (NASB). What is Paul describing?

II Tim. 1:8-10. How does God's grace differ from "our works"?

- When did God establish his plan of salvation? See Eph. 1:4

II Tim. 2:1. How are we strengthened by grace?

# for further study

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Titus 2:10-12. What, exactly, “appeared” that brought salvation to all people? When?

Titus 3:6-8. What does “justified” mean?

- How are we “justified by grace”?
- What else, according to other passages, are we “justified” by?

Read Heb. 4:15-15. What is the “throne of grace”?

- How does grace “help” in time of need?

Read Heb. 2:8-10. The writer says that Jesus “tasted death” by the grace of God. Explain.

Read Heb. 10:28-30. How might we “outrage” (ESV) or “insult” (NASB) the Spirit of grace?

Read Heb. 12:14-16. Explain how we may fail to obtain the grace of God.

Read Heb. 13:8-10. Describe the means through which the heart is strengthened by grace.

Read James 4:5-7. What is “more” grace? What does God actually give to the humble? (Cf. I Pet. 5:5)

Read I Pet. 3:7. Wives and husbands are joint heirs of the “grace of life.” What does that mean?

Read I Pet. 4:9-11. In what sense is God’s grace “manifold” or “varied”?

Read I Pet. 5:10. Here God is described as “the God of all grace.”

- What does “all” refer to?
- What does the rest of the verse promise?

Read I Pet. 5:11-13. What are we to “stand firm” in, exactly?

Read II Pet. 3:18. How do we “grow” in grace?

Read Jude 3-5. Who perverted “the grace of our God”?

- What did they do?